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SUBJECT: Vietnam's plans for the Mekong Initiative against
Trafficking

REF: 09 HANOI 1436

11. (SBU) Summary: Poloff and USAID project manager met with the Regional Project Manager for the UN's Interagency Project on Human Trafficking (UNIAP) on January 5 to obtain a briefing on progress under UNIAP's USAID-funded grant and discuss Vietnam's participation in the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking (COMMIT) process and Vietnam's overall efforts to combat TIP. Within COMMIT, Vietnam is focusing on training and capacity building. Vietnam's national priority areas include developing a National Plan of Action for 2011-2015, improving bilateral cooperation with neighboring countries, and drafting a law on human trafficking to submit to the National Assembly in October 2010 (reftel 09 HANOI 1436). According to UNIAP, over the past three years Vietnam has demonstrated "a new sense of wanting to move forward," and that his Vietnamese counterparts were "energized" when discussing how best to combat trafficking - a significant attitude shift. Post will co-host with UNIAP a TIP seminar focused on exploring opportunities to coordinate and leverage our anti-TIP activities with other like-minded diplomatic missions in Vietnam continue to look for ways to ensure that Vietnam's anti-TIP legislation meets international standards and is comprehensive. End Summary.

UNIAP and COMMIT

12. (SBU) UNIAP's Amcit regional project manager opened the January 5 meeting with Poloff and USAID Project Manager by recalling that in 2004, the six governments of the Greater Mekong Sub-region (Cambodia, China, Laos, Burma, Thailand, and Vietnam) signed a MOU to combat Trafficking in Persons and launch the COMMIT process. The MOU requires these governments to coordinate their anti-human trafficking efforts and to incorporate NGOs as partners. As part of the process, UNIAP meets annually with each country to develop a localized "work plan" that addresses the specific anti-human trafficking needs of each country. Each work plan is funded by a \$100,000 grant from UNIAP, supplemented with additional resources provided by NGO partners.

13. (SBU) Speaking with PolOff and the USAID Project Manager, UNIAP's regional project manager stated that this the UNIAP grant was key to the success of the COMMIT process, because many COMMIT member governments otherwise would not have the resources to implement their work plans. The COMMIT process also facilitates meetings at a regional level to discuss successes, gaps, trends, and coordination efforts. The most recent regional meeting was the biannual ministerial meeting held in Burma this January. UNIAP works in six countries, including Vietnam, with a staff of 30 region-wide and 250 government and NGO partners.

Vietnam's 2010 COMMIT work plan

14. (SBU) On January 5, Vietnam's COMMIT Task Force (which includes key government actors, the UN and NGO partners) and UNIAP held their annual meeting to develop a COMMIT work plan for 2010. Mr. Vu Hung Vuong, Deputy General Director, General Department of

Police, lead the GVN delegation. The UNIAP representative characterized Vietnam's 2010 work plan as "comprehensive, if somewhat ambitious," particularly in the areas of training and capacity building. Additional national priorities for Vietnam include developing a National Plan of Action for 2011-2015, improving regional bilateral cooperation (between Vietnam and COMMIT member countries) and, most importantly, preparing a draft law on human trafficking to submit to the National Assembly in October 2010. The UNIAP representative stated that of all the COMMIT member countries, Vietnam's work plan was tied closest to its National Plan of Action, which he said has resulted in both plans being more successfully implemented.

Beyond the work plan

15. (SBU) UNIAP and the GVN decided during their annual meeting to submit a formal proposal to the Prime Minister requesting that the current NC-130 anti-trafficking project be upgraded to a National Target Program. Such a designation would ensure national-level funding for NC-130 initiatives. GVN meeting participants reportedly argued that new anti-trafficking laws prepared by the government should define trafficking in accordance with international standards, an important goal since Vietnam's current definitions do not include some forms of labor trafficking and include other crimes, such as baby selling. According to UNIAP, the Ministry of Justice is drafting the new law and plans to present it to the National Assembly in October 2010, with a goal of ratification in May or June of 2011. As part of the process, the

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Ministry of Justice intends to host a forum on drafting its anti-trafficking law with regional and international experts to discuss their efforts in early spring 2010. (Comment: We have not seen the current form of the draft law. To the best of our knowledge, UNIAP is the only non-Vietnamese entity that has seen it. UNIAP has been asked not to share its contents with others, but has described its current form as "bare-bones and sketchy." It is unclear how open the GVN will be to input from the U.S. or others into the drafting of this law during its spring forum. End comment.)

16. (U) UNIAP Regional Representative and UNIAP Program Manager cited some key achievements of an ongoing three year \$500,000 USAID-funded UNIAP grant. First, the completion of a community-based survey on TIP, conducted in collaboration with An Giang University. The report's findings will be presented in a regional workshop on TIP statistics in Bangkok, tentatively scheduled for March this year. Second, the completion of a second series of training for staff from eight shelters in Vietnam, who are providing health, social and reintegration services for victims of trafficking. Trainees are provided with skills on victim assessment, case management and psychological counseling, and work on how to improve the quality of services in their shelters. And third, signing of three sub-grants with local NGOs to expand outreach services to TIP victims and high-risks groups. These program activities began early January 2010.

17. (SBU) UNIAP also discussed during the meeting its project to analyze returning immigration cases on the Vietnam-China border to determine what factors influence whether or not an individual becomes trafficked or experiences labor exploitation. A contractor is currently in the field trying to determine the best way to implement data collection. Vietnam has expressed some concern that the information collected might embarrass the Chinese government, as anecdotal accounts of returnees who are pushed back to the Vietnamese border indicate that returnees are not being treated well, he said.

A shift in attitude

18. (SBU) The UNIAP representative, a former USAID officer who has been working on COMMIT process for three years, said he has observed a noticeable shift in the attitude of the Vietnamese government towards addressing TIP-related issues. His Vietnamese

counterparts have "developed a new sense of wanting to move forward" and are "energized" when discussing how to address the TIP issue. Vietnamese government officials are more involved in meetings with other governments, due in part to their growing confidence when discussing the issues. This year, Thailand and Vietnam assume the two rotating member seats on the UNIAP board. The UNIAP representative said that he was confident that Vietnam would contribute positively.

Comment

19. (SBU) UNIAP's views on its 2010 partnership plans with the GVN and positive Vietnamese attitudes toward addressing TIP-related issues are welcome news and track with our recent discussions with national and provincial officials (septel). Our GVN interlocutors appear more engaged and committed to moving forward. Post is hosting a workshop with UNIAP and colleagues from other like-minded embassies here to build on this momentum and explore opportunities to coordinate and leverage our anti-TIP activities in Vietnam. We will continue to engage GVN officials on the status and contents of the new anti-trafficking legislation to try to ensure that it meets international standards and is comprehensive. End Comment.
Michalak